

PLAIN  
REASONS

- I. For Dissenting from the Communion of the Church of *England*.
- II. Why DISSENTERS are not, nor can be guilty of SCHISM, in peaceably Separating from the Places of Publick Worship in the Church of *England*.
- AND
- III. Several Common OBJECTIONS, brought by *Churchmen* against *Dissenters*, Answer'd.

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*By a true* PROTESTANT.

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The Pineteenth Edition.

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DEUT. v. 32.

*Ye shall observe to do AS the Lord your God commanded you; ye shall not turn aside to the right hand or to the left*

I COR. xi. 2.

*Now I praise you, Brethren, that you remember me in all things, and keep the Ordinances, AS I delivered them to You.*

If two Churches differ one from another, a Man is bound to join with that which appears most to retain its Evangelical Purity.

*Dr. Stillingfleet's Iren.*

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L O N D O N :

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# REASONS FOR DISSENTING FROM THE Church of *ENGLAND*.



OR as much as some of the *Church of England* lay on Dissenters the heavy Charge of *Schism*, and many of them know not how to clear themselves of that Charge: The following Pages are design'd,

1. To inform the more moderate of our Brethren of the *Church of England*, That we do not dissent from their Church out of Stubbornness, or because we love Contention, but from a tender Conscience, willing to keep the Ordinances as well as the Doctrines of JESUS CHRIST *pure and entire*; not daring to add to them, or diminish any Thing from them, under any Pretence whatsoever.

2. To furnish well-meaning Dissenters with *Plain Reasons* for their common Practice: For we would have none among us go on blind-fold in Christianity, or take up a Profession among Dissenters, because their Fathers went before them in that Way, as if it were a Crime

to step out of their Path: But we believe, That as every one ought to be ready to give a Reason of the Hope that is in them; so they should be ready to give a Reason of their Practice, in religious Matters: For every one should be well persuaded in their own Mind, that what they do may be done in Faith; For whatsoever is not of Faith, is Sin. He that takes up any Profession, be it never so good, only from Education, without examining it in every part, is never like to be a useful, if ever he be a true Christian.

## P A R T I.

*Containing ten REASONS for Dissenting from the Church.*

### REASON I.



WE dissent from the Church of England, because we do not look upon it to be so pure a Church as some others are.

If any by the Church of England do understand the whole Nation, we declare we know no such Church. But if any take the Church of England for particular Parish Assemblies, or Congregations, then we do not say but some of them may be true Churches, tho' they may be defective in Doctrine and Discipline; (for a Man that hath lost his Hands to work, and his Feet to walk, and his Eyes to see, is a true Man, tho' defective;) and yet, we think we have sufficient Warrant for our Practice in dissenting from them. For we do for our Souls, as they and we do for our Bodies: If we are sick, we choose out a skilful Physician; lest he kills instead of curing us. When we want Food, we take care to buy that which is wholesome, such as will nourish us. If we remove our Habitation, we choose out a good wholesome Air; not an unhealthy, sickly Place. If we change our Servants, we seek others

thers that are skilful, faithful and diligent; not such as are either ignorant of their Work, or lazy in it; or such as care for nothing but their Wages: Then can any blame us, if we take as much Care of our Souls which are of more Value? When many speak of the *Church of England*, they think of nothing else but the Place of divine Worship; and they are strengthen'd in this Error by the industrious Priest-craft of designing Men: For they know that the *Greek Word*, so often used for *Church* [in the *New Testament*] always signifies *the People met together*, not the Place where they meet, *Acts* xiv. 27. *1 Cor.* xiv. 23. But their Design herein is to make the unthinking People believe, that if they leave that Place, they leave the Church of GOD.

BUT the Place of Worship [call'd the *Church*]

1. CANNOT be the Church which CHRIST purchased with his own Blood, and which Ministers are charged to feed, *Acts* xx. 28.

2. IT cannot be the Church that brought the Apostle on in his Way, *Acts* xv. 3.

3. IT cannot be the Church in an House, *1 Cor.* xvi. 19.

4. IT cannot be the Church that was to be spoken to, and that was to speak to others, *Matth.* xviii. 17.

5. IT cannot be that Church, which is said to be *the Body of Christ*, and of which, *Jesus Christ was the Head*, *Col.* i. 24.

Q. WHAT then is the Church?

A. " THE Visible Church is a Congregation of  
" faithful Men, met together to worship GOD, in  
" which the pure Word of GOD is preach'd, and  
" the Sacraments be duly ministred, according to  
" CHRIST'S Ordinance, in all those Things that of  
" Necessity are requisite to the same.

(This is the XIX<sup>th</sup> Article of the *Church of England*.) Wherein observe,

I. THE Visible Church is a Congregation; therefore not a Whole Nation: For when did the Church  
of

of England [so consider'd] *meet together* in one Congregation? By their own Words, the Visible Church must be no more than can *meet together* to worship GOD, in one Place, otherwise 'tis not a Congregation. Cyprian saith, *The whole Church was present at the Administration of the Sacrament.* And Justin Martyr tells us, *That all the Church assembled together in one Place, every Lord's Day.* And the Scripture saith the same, 1 Cor. xiv. 23. *If therefore the whole Church be come together into one Place.*

II. THE *Article* saith, It is a Congregation of *Faithful Men* (i. e.) of Believers in CHRIST.) A Gospel-Church ought to consist of none but visible Saints, 1 Cor. xiv. 33. *In all the Churches of the Saints.* The Clergy know, whether, in this Matter, they act according to their *Articles* in admitting none to their Communion but the *Faithful*; or whether *saying* the *Creed* will not do: For some that have been Ten Years Communicants in the *Church of England*, have declar'd, on their Death-Bed, " That they knew not what  
" *Faith* in CHRIST meant; and that their Minister  
" never ask'd them a Word about it; but only told  
" them, that they should have *so much Money* each  
" Time they came to the Lord's-Supper.

III. IT is a Congregation where *the pure Word of God is preach'd.* Here the *Article* affirms, That what they preach, must be *the pure Word of God.* Not an Oration of the excellent Constitution of their Church, or of Passive Obedience, or an Exclamation against Schism, or a Discourse of Morality, or only exclaiming against such Vices as the very Light of Nature condemns.

BUT to preach *the pure Word of God*, is, to preach JESUS CHRIST, and Sinner's Need of an Interest in Him, and of his Justifying Righteousness, and to magnify the Riches of Divine Grace in Man's Salvation: It is to preach the Doctrines of *Faith*, *Repentance*, *Regeneration* and *Sanctification*, and the Necessity of the Power of the *Spirit of GOD*, in order to all these.

These

These are the Doctrines that Dissenters preach, and thus they preach most agreeable to the *pure Word of God*, and the XXXIX. *Articles of Religion*: Therefore, tho' we are call'd *Dissenters*, yet many, that keep in the *Church of England*, are Dissenters more than we: For we dissent only from *indifferent Things* (as they call them) but they dissent from their own *Articles of Faith*.

IV. THE Sacraments must be *duly administred according to Christ's Ordinance*.

V. IN the *Administration of the Ordinances of Christ* there must be no *unnecessary Things imposed on Men*. These are the several Parts of that XIX<sup>th</sup> Article, and we heartily agree to every one of them, but we shall speak of these Two last afterward.

BUT by the Way, since the *Article* saith, *That the pure Word of God must be preach'd*, it may not be amiss here, to take a little Notice of the common Preachers of the Word in the *Church of England*.

MANY Ministers of the *Church of England* are Men of great Learning and Parts; but, it seems, that the most of them have little enough, and yet have more than many of them make a good Use of; you have their Picture drawn to the Life, and it would even affright a Christian to behold it, tho' drawn by a skilful Hand. Bp. Burnet *New Pref.* p. 5, 6. [for whose Plainness in exposing their hateful and shameful Ignorance and Idleness, some of the Clergy curse him bitterly.] His Words are these:

“OUR *Ember-Weeks* are the  
 “Grief and Burden of my Life: The  
 “much greater Part of those who  
 “come to be Ordain'd, are ignorant to a Degree not  
 “to be apprehended by those who are not oblig'd to  
 “know it: The easiest Part of Knowledge is that to  
 “which they are the greatest Strangers; I mean, the  
 “plainest Parts of the Scriptures, which they say, in  
 “Excuse of this Ignorance, that their Tutors in the  
 “University never mentioned the reading of them:  
 “So that they can give no Account, or at least but a  
 “very

“ very imperfect one, of the Contents even of the  
 “ Gospels. Those who have read some few Books,  
 “ yet never seem to have read the Scriptures: Many  
 “ cannot give a tolerable Account even of the *Cate-*  
 “ *chism* itself, how short and plain soever: *They cry,*  
 “ and think it a Disgrace to be denied Orders, though  
 “ the Ignorance of some is such, that in a well-regu-  
 “ lated State of Things, they would appear not know-  
 “ ing enough to be admitted to the Holy Sacrament;  
 “ this does often tear my Heart. The Case is not  
 “ much better in many, who having got into Orders,  
 “ come for Institution, and cannot make it appear that  
 “ they have read the *Scriptures*, or *any one good Book,*  
 “ since they were ordain’d.” *Thus far the Bishop.*

WE dare not trust our precious Souls with such  
 Guides; for how can they shew us the Way of Sal-  
 vation, who cannot tell what the Gospels contain?  
 Instead of being Teachers of others, they have need  
 themselves to be taught which be the first Principles  
 of the Oracles of GOD. O shameful, not know their  
*Catechism*, nor what the Gospels contain! Have these  
 been at the *University*, and made a great noise of  
 taking their *Degree*, and after this need to be sent back  
 to their *School Dames*! Well, for Fear of Disgrace,  
 in being *denied Orders*, the Bishop saith, *they cry.* O  
 rare Hectors! Are those the Men that lead our Gentry,  
 as well as the common People, by the Nose? It would  
 be the Nation’s Mercy to have a due Sense of this  
 Disease, *If the Blind lead the Blind, both are like to*  
*fall into the Ditch.* I think we may apply that Com-  
 plaint of GOD, by the Prophet, to these poor dark  
 Souls, *Isa. lvi, 10, 11. His Watchmen are blind, they*  
*are ignorant, they are Shepherds that cannot understand.*  
 Are these like to feed the People of GOD with Know-  
 ledge and Understanding? Surely, GOD never sent these  
 Men to preach, or else He hath sent them in sore  
 Judgment to this Land.

Obj. *Our Tutors never bid us read the Scriptures.*

A. WHAT Tutors are here! If there is so little Religion at the *Fountain*, no Wonder we have so little at the *Streams*. But what if their Tutors did not put them upon reading the Scriptures, if they had had any Love to the Word of GOD in their Hearts, they would not have been such Strangers to the Word of GOD? If they themselves have not made *Food* of the Word of GOD, they are not like to do much Good at Preaching, *Ezek. iii. 1. Son of Man, eat this Roll, and go speak to the House of Israel.*

BUT suppose these were all very learned Men, (which cannot be granted) yet they have little Need of it, provided they can read right: For all have their Prayers made for them, and many of them their Sermons too. Be sure that GOD disapproves of such a lazy Practice. *Jer. xxiii. 30. I am against the Prophets, saith the LORD, that steal my Words every one from his Neighbour.*

WE honour human Learning much; but we do not count him the best Minister that hath the greatest Stock of that; but the Man who, with it, hath most Grace and spiritual Experience; who preaches JESUS CHRIST, and whose Ministry GOD most owns for the Conversion of Sinners, and Building up Believers in *their most holy Faith*; and who himself lives a holy Life. We believe that Ministers had better be defective in human Learning, than in the Grace of GOD; therefore when we choose a Pastor, we do not enquire, Who ordain'd him? Or, What Garments does he wear? But, What Doctrines does he preach? What Life does he live? And, Are there any Signs of GOD's sending him? Not, Does he Preach in the Church, or in a Barn? But, Whether his Preaching be in Demonstration of the Spirit and of Power?

## REASON II.

WE dissent from the *Church of England*, because we cannot take the *Common-Prayer-Book* for our Rule of Worship.

1. BECAUSE it orders the Reading of much of the *Apocrypha* (instead of the pure Word of GOD) wherein are many Things very fabulous, and we think Untruths, Things that *administer Questions, rather than godly Edifying, which is in Faith.*

2. BECAUSE it appoints all Persons religiously to observe above an Hundred and Fifty Days in the Year, as *Holy Time*, besides all Sabbath-Days.

WE count the Sabbath of the LORD Honourable; We also religiously observe Occasional Days of Prayer and Thanksgiving, but cannot bind our selves religiously to observe what we have no divine Warrant for: But are rather forbid the touching of, *Gal. iv. 9, 10.*

11. *But now, after that ye have known God, &c. how turn ye again to the weak and beggarly Elements, whereunto you desire again to be in Bondage? Ye observe Days and Months, and Times and Years. I am afraid of you, lest I have bestowed on you Labour in vain.*

3. BECAUSE thereby are impos'd on all Ministers Forms of Prayers. If it be granted (as we think there is no Reason) that our Lord JESUS CHRIST made a Form of Prayer for his Disciples to be used Word for Word, without Alteration; yet by what Rule do any Men do so for others, and then impose them upon them for their constant Use? *Origen*, in giving Direction about Prayer, saith not one Word of the *Lord's Prayer*; only held it as a Rule to direct us in Prayer. So *Justin Martyr* and others.

WE have a Promise of the Spirit of Grace and of Supplication, *Zech. xii. 10.* But no Promise of the Help of the Spirit, to any Man or Men to make Forms for others.

IF some use them in Sincerity, and can bring GOD no better, I believe GOD will accept them; but if we

have a better Offering to bring, we must not offer that which *cost us Nothing*.

IF we tye up our selves to Forms, how can we say with St. Paul, Rom. vii. 26. *We know not what we should pray for as we ought?* They that pray by a Book, know, to a Word, what they should pray for? If they have their Book, Light, Sight, and Learning enough to read it, they never need to be at a Loss about the Matter.

WHAT if some Ministers need these Forms? Let such Parsons use them, that cannot do without them: But why must strong Men tye up their Legs, that they may use Stilts too? This is *to neglect*, and not *to stir up the Gift of God which is in them*, 2 Tim. i. 6.

WE never read in all the Word of GOD, of any such Custom as Praying by Book; though we read of the Prayers of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, Samuel, David, Solomon, Elisha, Isaiah, Hezekiah, Jeremiah, Jonah, Daniel, Ezra, Nehemiah, and of the Apostles. The History of the first Three Centuries speaks not one Word of imposed Prayers, but that they prayed according to the Ability that GOD gave them, and that they prayed with their Eyes, either lifted up to Heaven, or with their Eyes closed; which shew that they did not pray by Book.

DO TH an hungry or starving Man want a Form before him, to tell his Wants by? We should question whether that Beggar was not a Cheat, who could not tell his Case, without reading of it out of his Book. If the Churches took due Care to choose able Ministers, this Grievance would be laid aside: Or if it were left *indifferent*, as indifferent Things should be, that *those might use them, that could not pray without them*; Men would, for Shame, take up another Practice. The Forms of Prayer, and Books of Homilies, were both compos'd to help the (poor Tools of) Priests, at our first coming off from Popery: For the Priests were so ignorant, that they could neither pray nor preach. But now, since in the Church, we have

Men of more Learning and better Parts, why must they claim this *Benefit of the Clergy*? [as they count it] And why must the Homilies be laid aside, and not the Forms of Prayer?

WE verily think, that those who have the Help of the Spirit of GOD to preach, have his Help also to pray; but if they want the *Spirit of Grace and Supplication*, they are not fit to preach.

Obj. 1. *That Promise of the Help of the Spirit of God in Prayer, is to raise our Affections, and to draw out Grace to its Exercise in Prayer.*

*Ans.* WE allow it heartily; but that is not all, nor the principal Thing intended: For the Promise is concerning the *Matter*, as well as the *Manner*: The Apostle, *Rom. viii. 26.* speaking of GOD's fulfilling that Promise, *Zech. xii. 10.* doth not say, We know not *how* to pray, but *what* to pray for.

BUT in tying up our selves to Forms, we shut out the Work of the Spirit, as to the *Matter*; and if we thus *limit the Holy One of Israel*, how can we promise ourselves his Help in the other? In short, This seems, to us, like offering with *strange Fire*, *Lev. x. 1.* which GOD testified his Displeasure against in consuming the wicked Priests.

Obj. 2. *The Way of Praying by Book, hath been of very long standing in the Church.*

*Ans.* BUT the Way that Dissenters take in Prayer, hath been used Two Thousand Years before ever there was *any Book* in the World, and very probable, many more Thousands before it became a Custom for Christians to pray by Book.

Obj. 3. *But when we address ourselves to GOD, we should use the most decent Expressions.*

*Ans.* IT is very true, we should worship with *Reverence, and godly Fear*: But it is the Heart, not fine Words,

Words, or elegant Expressions, that G O D looks at; if the Heart be upright with G O D in Prayer, and if it be done in Faith, G O D can, and will overlook an hundred Slips of the Tongue, and hear Prayer, tho' it be as *Hezekiah's*, Isa. xxxviii. 14. like the chattering of the Crane or a Swallow.

Obj. 4. Dissenters are liable to vent false Doctrines by their Way of Praying.

Ans. So may those that keep strictly to a Form; witness that daily Petition of the Church, "*Remember not, Lord, the Offences of our Forefathers.*" What is truly intended in it, we do not dispute; but it looks like *Praying for the Dead*. So does that Form favour of Error, in the Order for Baptism, that places Pardon of Sin in *Regeneration*, instead of the *Merits of Christ*. Of which, after.

Obj. 5. Dissenters Prayers are often incoherent.

Ans. So may Forms of Prayer be too. Take one Instance in their own Words:

"*Almighty and everlasting God, who alone workest great Marvels, send down upon our Bishops and Curates, &c. thy Grace.*" Must we say, That it would be a great Marvel, if God should send down his Grace on Bishops and Curate? Then where is the Coherence of that Prayer? I never heard any thing more incoherent in the Prayers of Dissenters.

Obj. 6. For Want of a Form, Dissenters Prayers are sometimes very unintelligible, the People know not what they intend by some of their Petitions.

Ans. So may set Forms be too. Let their own Form be Witness:

"*Those Things, which, for our Unworthiness, we dare not ask, and which, for our Blindness, we cannot ask, vouchsafe to give us, &c.*" with many others like it.

Obj.

Obj. 7. *For Want of a Form of Prayer, Dissenters are often guilty of many Tautologies, or Repetition of the same Thing.*

*Answ.* NOT half so often as those that use a Form: For they use the same Petition six, eight, ten, or twenty Times over; *Lord, have Mercy upon us, &c. We beseech thee to hear us, good Lord, &c.* this seems to cross the Command, *Matth. vi. 7. When thou prayest, use not vain Repetitions, as the Heathen do: For they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking, 1 Kings xviii. 26.*

Obj. 8. *The Prayers of the Church were compos'd by wise and learned Men, that better knew the Work and Nature of Prayer than we do.*

*Answ.* How great, or wise, or learned the Composers were, we matter not; for though they were Apostles, or Angels of GOD, if they bring us any Rules of Faith or Practice that have not the Stamp of the Wisdom and Authority of JESUS CHRIST upon them; we cannot, we dare not receive them.

NEITHER was there any need of these human Inventions, till the Spirit, Life and Power of Religion was gone from the *Romish Church*, and then this Device was brought into the Church, to serve instead thereof: And we use to say, *A bad Shift is better than none.* But 'tis Pity that the Reformed Churches should dance after her Pipes.

### REASON III.

WE cannot join with the *Church of England* in their Order for Baptism.

I. WE except against that Human Ordinance, *Signing with the Cross*, as a Popish Invention.

IT is order'd to be done, "*In Token that hereafter they shall not be ashamed to confess Christ crucified.*" And so they make the Cross a Sacrament; for by their

own

own Definition of a Sacrament, it is made an "outward and visible Sign of inward and spiritual Grace." We want a Warrant from the Word of GOD for it, before we can use it in Faith. It smells of the Vessel whence it was drawn. And we wonder why this is not laid aside, as well as *Salt, Cream, and Spittle*, still used in Baptism by the Papists.

2. BY the Form of Baptism in the Church of England, Parents are not suffer'd to Covenant with GOD for their own Children: But others must do it, tho' they be Strangers, and may never see the Child again: Nay, they must be other Persons, though the Parents were gracious, and the Godfathers and Godmothers were wicked; and so are more likely to neglect their Charge.

Obj. 9. *Godfathers and Godmothers were in Use under the Law, as Witnesses at Circumcision.*

*Answ.* BESIDES the Circumciser, there were two Persons made use of; a *Woman*, whose Work it was to carry the Child from the Mother to the Place of Circumcision, and back again to the Mother; and a *Man* to hold the Child in his Lap while it was circumcised; but neither of them promised any Thing for the Child, as these now do.

3. THE Godfathers and Godmothers are forc'd to promise what is in the Power of no Creature on Earth or in Heaven to perform, *That the Child shall renounce the Devil and all his Works, and constantly believe God's holy Word, and obediently keep all his Commandments, and walk in the same all the Days of his Life.* And when all this is done, it is what *the most of them* never mind, either for themselves or the Child. Or, if they think of their Promises, how dare they put themselves in the Place of GOD? Whose Work it is alone, to change the Heart, and work Faith in it; and to *cause Men to walk in his Statutes, and keep his Commandments, and do them*, Ezek. xxxvi. 27.

4. WE see no Reason to believe, that every Child baptised with Water, is also regenerated by the special Grace of GOD, as they express in their Order for Baptism, in these Words :

*We call upon Thee for this Infant, that he coming to Thy holy Baptism, may receive Remission of Sins, by spiritual Regeneration.*

THE Word of GOD tells us, That Remission of Sins is only by the Blood of JESUS CHRIST, not by *Water-Baptism*, nor by *spiritual Regeneration*. So that there is a double Error in this Form, and they themselves have prov'd both of them ready to our Hands, in the Order for the Communion ; where they have these Words ; *In Remembrance of Christ's meritorious Cross and Passion, whereby alone, we obtain Remission of Sins, and are made Partakers of the Kingdom of Heaven.* By this gross Blunder the Compilers of the *Common-Prayer-Book* shew themselves to be no inspired Writers, as some of its fond Admirers have asserted.

5. IN the Order for Baptism, they assert, *That it is clear from the Word of God, that Children baptised, and dying in their Infancy, before they commit actual Sin, are undoubtedly saved.*

IT is not clear to us, nor can they shew it in all the Word of GOD. But human Inventions commonly favour of human Infirmities.

Obj. 10. *Whatever is amiss in our Baptism ; The Baptism of Dissenters is invalid : Because they have not received Episcopal Ordination. [So say Churchmen.]*

*Ans. WE might as well say, and more easily prove it too, that what unscriptural Officers do, in the Church, is invalid. Some call that Apostolical, which the Apostles never thought of : And though highly approved of Men, will be found an abomination to the Lord.*

#### REASON IV.

WE cannot join with the Church of England in the Lord's-Supper

1. BECAUSE they order every one to *kneel* at their receiving it. It is the Custom of the *Papists* to do so, and their Reason is, Because they believe that the Bread, after Consecration, is the very Body of CHRIST: But, if it be not so, it looks like Idolatry to kneel before it. But because this was not the Custom of the Apostles, [but Sitting, *Matth. xxvi. 20, 26.*] and because we are bid to *abstain from all Appearance of Evil*; therefore we reject it.

2. BECAUSE they order the Sacrament to be administered to the Sick; and admit it to be done to two or three Persons, when there is no Church present. Because this Ordinance should be administered only in the Church; and because this Custom springs from the same Ground with saying private Mass in Houses, and having no Warrant from the Word of GOD; therefore most of the Reformed Churches rejected it, and therefore so do we.

3. BECAUSE Persons are allow'd to come to that holy Ordinance, to qualify themselves for Places of Trust and Profit. This is a horrid profaning of a most sacred Ordinance, that was never design'd to serve instead of a License.

4. BECAUSE they ordinarily admit any Person to that Ordinance that desires it. And more; for they order the Minister to invite all to it, that are present at Hearing the Word, in this Manner: *On such a Day we are to administer the holy Communion, unto which, in God's Behalf, I bid you all here present.* How this is in God's Behalf, we are at a Loss, 'till we find a Warrant for it in the Word of GOD.

ARE all that come to Church fit to go to the Table of the LORD? Whether they are or not, it seems, they must be all invited: It is manifest that many of them go thither only for their Hire. And it's manifest that many of them are very unfit to go to that holy Ordinance.

1. BECAUSE they are destitute of saving Knowledge and Faith, and are Strangers to true Repentance

and spiritual Regeneration. Be sure, such cannot discern the Lord's Body; but must eat and drink unworthily, tho' they say they are in *Charity with all Men*, which is all that they ask of their Communicants.

2. MANY of them live very wicked Lives; *swear* and be *drunk* the same Night that they have been at the Lord's Supper, and oft in the Week.

To administer the Holy Communion to such, is to cast that which is Holy to Dogs; which we are expressly forbid to do. Where Matters are thus manag'd, it can hardly be truly said, "That the Sacraments are *duly* administred according to CHRIST's Appointment," as their XIX<sup>th</sup> Article saith they should be.

#### REASON V.

WE dissent from the *Church of England*, because the Generality of the Priests dissent from their old Doctrines and the chief of the *Thirty nine Articles of Religion*; as may be seen by comparing their Preaching and Writings now, with the Writings of their old godly Ministers, in the Reign of Queen *Elizabeth*, and IX<sup>th</sup>, X<sup>th</sup>, XI<sup>th</sup>, XIII<sup>th</sup>, and XVII<sup>th</sup> *Articles of the Church of England*, and with the Nine Articles of *Lambeth*. Thus they force us, either to dissent from them, or from their old Doctrines: We choose to keep to the good old Way. And hence the *Church of England* is beholden to us to keep their old Doctrines for them. Dr. Edward's Preacher.

#### REASON VI.

WE except against Two Things, especially in the Order for the Burial of the Dead.

I. "*They thank God for taking them away*:" (Bad as well as Good :) We dare not do this at a Burial of many; because we fear they die in their Sins, Strangers to CHRIST, true Faith, and real Holiness. As we have no Warrant for such an universal Form, so none but an Enemy to the Deceas'd, or a coverous Legatee, will heartily say *Amen* to it.

2. NOR can we say (as they do) of every one, (even the vilest Wretches that they bury) That *"We have sure and certain Hope of their Resurrection to eternal Life :"* For we really think we should often speak against our Consciences, and the Persuasion of most that hear us. We believe the Doctrine of the Resurrection ; but do not believe that *every One* shall rise to eternal Life. *Dan. xii. 2.* Those that believe the Doctrine of Purgatory, have much more Colour of Reason for their Use of this Form than we : For the Papists hold, That tho' a Person may not be fit for eternal Life when he dies ; yet he may be fitted for it after Death. This unscriptural Doctrine the Church of England denies ; and yet she teaches her Disciples, *That there is not one Soul goes to Hell*, that hath the Good-luck to have Christian Burial [as they call it, that is, to have the Order for the Burial of the Dead read over them.] How inconsistent is this with their other Work, as well as with the Word of God?

#### REASON VII.

WE withdraw from the Communion of the Church of England, because we cannot allow of such Officers in the Church, as Diocesan, or Lord Bishops. As they are Lords, we honour them as Officers of State ; but not as Bishops in the Church.

WE own all faithful Pastors of particular Congregations, to be scriptural Bishops, and the Scriptures know no other. Our Lord JESUS CHRIST forbid it, *Mark x. 42, 45.* *Ye know that they which are accounted to rule over the Gentiles, exercise Lordship over them ; and their great Ones exercise Authority upon them, but so it shall not be among you ; but whosoever will be great among you, shall be your Minister ; and whosoever among you will be the chiefest, shall be Servant of all, &c.* And as the Scriptures know no such Office, so the first and purest Ages of Christianity knew no such Office in the Churches.

*Athanasius* is said to be Bishop of *Alexandria*, (and a Bishop he was) but not a Diocesan Bishop; for he had no more Christians in his Community than might meet in *one Place*. So saith *Cyprian*, *Polycarp*, *Irenaeus* and *Justin Martyr*. We read of Abundance of Bishops in the Histories of the Church, for above Three Hundred Years after CHRIST: But none of them could be Diocesan Bishops: because many of them were not above six, some five, some four, some three, and some but two Miles one from another. These were as near as our Parish-Ministers are one to another. But more than that, we read of *Two Bishops*, in their *Bishopricks*, in the same City, at the same Time, Phil. i. 1. not setting up in Opposition one to another, but by the Consent of both, as well as of the People. Thus it was at *Jerusalem*, at *Antioch* and *Ephesus*; so that their Bishops were but Presbyters, Elders or Pastors of particular Congregations: As *Cyprian*, *Clemens Romanus* and *Origen* declare in their Writings. Such Bishops we heartily own; but no other in the Church.

#### REASON VIII.

WE cannot allow that the Bishop or Patron should impose a Pastor upon any Parish, without the Consent and Choice of the People: But are willing to use the Liberty which GOD hath given us; that is, for the People to choose their own Pastor. “ The fullest  
“ Words that the *Greek* Authors use for all the Parts  
“ of Election; as, to propose, to name, to choose,  
“ to decree, are (in Church-History) applied to the  
“ *People*; so that in the Primitive Church, the *People*  
“ did propose, name, elect and decree, as well as the  
“ Clergy; and tho’ the Presbyters had more Skill to  
“ judge, yet the *People* had as much Right to choose  
“ their own Pastors.

THUS, a Thousand Years after CHRIST’S Ascension, the Council of *Nice* decreed, “ That if any Bi-  
“ shop decease, any other, reconcil’d to the Church,  
“ may be admitted, provided they be worthy, and the  
“ *People*

" People do choose them." Should any one Man engross to himself, and his Heirs, the Power to impose upon every Woman in the Parish such a Husband as he, or they think fit, it would be counted an intolerable Imposition : We look on this Custom of imposing a Pastor upon a Church, without the People's Choice and Consent, to have a very near Resemblance to it. All the Fathers of the first three Centuries agree that the People should choose their own Minister.

### REASON IX.

WE dissent from the *Church of England*, because we think it wants *godly Discipline* : This [as to one particular Branch] the Church confesseth every Year ; and this Confession hath been a Form to them these Hundred Years, without Alteration. It hardly looks like Sincerity ; but there it stands unaltered :

1. FOR a Witness against themselves, that have Power to alter it, and do not.

2. FOR the Justification of those who dissent from them, because it wants *godly Discipline*.

SOME Discipline they have ; but, if you will believe them, they want *godly Discipline* ; for all the Discipline they have seems to be more to get Money, than to bring Sinners to Repentance.

IF any Person commits a Fault that is worthy of Excommunication, it is not in the Power of any Parish Minister, with all his Congregation, to excommunicate that Offender ; but this must be done by Lay-Men ; though, I confess, it is done in the Bishop's Name, yet these Lay-Men do as they please. Of this Matter, a Bishop of their own faith, " The Church " would be more secure, and more unexceptionable, " if the Administration of her Discipline was put into " other Hands, and in a better Method." *Ep. Burnet.*

THERE little Crimes are sometimes punished heavily, as, not wearing the Surplice, and great ones come off lightly ; or, it may be, never enquir'd into, or are wink'd at ; as the Parson or Curate's being drunk

two or three times a Week, or Swearing at every Sentence; it is as the Laymen please. Whether *Money will answer all Things* in the Bishop's Court, we shall not enquire; but, be sure, it will answer the Place of Repentance; for when the Money is paid, the Offender is again a good Church-Member, and the Parson cannot refuse him, without Danger of Suspension.

IF any Man, prosecuted in the Bishop's Court, gives any Signs of Repentance, why is he not restor'd to his Place without Money? Why do they make a Gain of their Brother's Sins? And if he does not give any Signs of Repentance, how comes his Money to answer the Place of Repentance?

IF Money will admit Persons into the Communion of the *Church of England*, we hope it never shall into our Churches: If such an Offender should offer his Money to us, on such an Account, we should think *St. Peter's Answer to Simon Magus*, did in some sort belong to him; *Thy Money perish with thee, because thou thoughtest the Gift of God might be purchased with Money, thy Heart is not upright with God; thou art in the Gall of Bitterness, and Bond of Iniquity.*

#### REASON X.

WE leave the Communion of the *Church of England*, because it hath often shewn a persecuting Spirit in it. We never read that the Church of CHRIST did persecute others; but JESUS CHRIST told his Disciples that *They must expect it. They that live godly in Christ Jesus, must suffer Persecution.* This hath been just Matter of Offence to us, That *Dissenters* that live honestly, quietly, soberly and godly among them, have suffer'd much from the *Church of England* by Fines and Imprisonments, and have been hated, at the same Time that Swearers, Drunkards, &c. have been free from Trouble, and spoken kindly too, provided they did but own themselves to be of the *Church of England*, tho' they seldom come there.

Obj. **DISSENTERS** may thank themselves for their own Stubbornness; for the Ceremonies are but indifferent Things.

*Ans.* WHY then do they not leave them indifferent, *i. e.* whether Men will use them or not? Why do they make them Terms, not only of Communion, but of Salvation; for they tell us, That *Schism*, on this Account, is a damning Sin, as much as Murder or Adultery. It is strange to us, how it should be as dangerous to break the Laws of Man, as it is to break the Laws of GOD. But this is a real Truth, That many warm Churchmen are more careful to avoid the Worship of Dissenters, than they are to avoid the Sins of Murder or Adultery. If they are indifferent Things to them, why do they offend our Consciences, in thrusting them upon us, who cannot think them so. This is far from that Christian Spirit, 1 Cor. viii. 13. *I will eat no Flesh while the World standeth, lest I make my Brother to offend.*

THAT which Ministers deliver to the Churches, they must, first, receive of the LORD, 1 Cor. xi. 23. *I have received of the LORD*; [that is, of the Lord JESUS CHRIST, not the Lord Bishop] *that which I delivered unto you.*

PRINCES are very jealous of their Sovereign Rights and Privileges; and we believe, the Lord JESUS CHRIST is so of His; and that whatsoever Shew of Decency human Inventions may make to the Eyes, of carnal Persons, such officious Intruders will one Day hear Him say, *Who hath required these Things at your Hands.*

ESPECIALLY, when by such human Ceremonies they keep many a Child of GOD out of the Church, tho' we and they too have an expresse Charge not to have any thing to do with such Things, Gal. v. 1. *Stand fast in the Liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the Yoke of Bondage.*

IF GOD hath taken off the Yoke of Jewish Ceremonies, He never intended that Men should invent new ones, which tend to Superstition.


WE believe that a Serpent of Brass, when it hath the Stamp of GOD's Authority on it, is better than a golden Calf of Mens Invention; the one heals, the other hurts.



## P A R T II.

*Containing Six REASONS why Dissenters are not, nor can be guilty of Schism, in peaceably Separating from the Church of England.*

The Word SCHISM is used,

I.  OR Breach of Union in the Church; thus, those that *abide in the Church*, may be guilty of *Schism*, more than those that *peaceably leave it*; while they that remain in it, make Divisions and Parties, differing about Doctrines, &c. This is *Schism in the Body*, 1 Cor. xii. 25.

2. IT is used for any *causeless Separation* from a Church; a *peaceable Departure* from any Church is not *Schism*; or when there is just Cause for leaving its Communion.

BUT my present Business is to prove, That even in the Sense of the Church of *England*, Dissenters are not guilty of *Schism*; notwithstanding the Noise that the Clergy make about it.

### REASON I.

THE greatest Part of the Body of Dissenters now living never were Members of the *Church of England*; they never broke off from it: And therefore are not guilty of *Schism*.

Obj. *But they were born in England, and the Church of England is a National Church.*

Ans. THE Church of CHRIST was not so; for we read of Seven Churches in the *Lesser Asia*, Rev. i. 4. *And the Churches of Judæa*, which was once a National Church, Gal. i. 22.

IF our being born in *England* makes us Church-Members, then, in order to any One's Admission to the Lord's-Supper, it need not be ask'd, Have you Faith, &c. but, Where were you born?

Obj. *But some of you gave your Consent to be Members of the Church of England.*

Ans. IT is true; and so we were Members indeed; but better understanding the Doctrines and Discipline of CHRIST's Church, and Christian Liberty, we have made no unlawful Rent in the Church, but have peaceably join'd ourselves to other Churches, where we are better satisfied, as St. Paul, Gal. i. 13, 14, 15, 16. by his own Example hath taught us.

## REASON II.

IF the Spirit of GOD is, in great Measure, departed from any Church, then we may dissent from it, without being guilty of *Schism*; for *Schism* is a causeless Separation from any Church: But if this be true, our Separation is not causeless.

Quest. *But how shall we judge of this Matter?*

Ans. IF there be no Conversion-Work in the Church, then the Spirit of GOD is withdrawn from it: *Glorious Things have been spoken of the City of God, that many have been born in her.* But now some of the best Ministers in the Church have confess'd, That after Forty Years Preaching in their Parish, they know not of one Soul Converted in all that Time. If there be no moving of the Waters, in vain do Souls look and wait for Healing at such a Pool.

IF the Generality, both of Ministers and People, hold no such Doctrine, and look for no such Thing as spiritual Regeneration, or being born again, after Baptism (in Infancy) by the Spirit of GOD, through the Word; or if most look on this Doctrine as *Presbyterian Cant*, we conclude, such are Strangers to any Experience of the Thing; [for they are Strangers to the plain Gospel of JESUS CHRIST, *John* iii. 3, 5.] and that therefore we have sufficient Reason to attend on the Ministry, where the Truth is experienc'd, and where Ministers can tell convinc'd Souls what they should do to be saved.

2. IF there be little or no comforting Presence of the Spirit of GOD there, then our Separation is not causeless; and therefore is not a *Schism*. Some have said, That a Bottle of Wine, or a Dose of proper Physick, or a Tune on the Organs, would do as much for dejected Souls, as Dissenters pretend to meet with, of Comfort in their Worship; so little do many of them understand *how it is that GOD manifests himself to his own, as he doth not to the World*, *John* xiv. 22. Therefore we choose to attend on the Ministry of such as have more spiritual Experience, who may be able to *speak a Word in Season to our weary Souls*.

### REASON III.

IF in any Church there be but little real Holiness, or but little of the Power of Religion and Godliness, or but little more than a Name to live, we may leave the Communion of any such Church, without being guilty of *Schism*, *2 Tim.* iii. 5. *Having the Form of Godliness, but denying the Power; from such turn away.* *2 Cor.* vi. 7. *Come out from among them.*

IN a large Parish, some of their own Members have confess'd, "That they could not find five Persons in their Community, of whom they were persuaded they were Believers, or real Christians; such as shewed an Hatred of Sin, and Love to Holiness." What Communion can a serious Christian have with such a Church?

IF

IF a Gardener grows more fond and careful of Weeds than he is of useful Plants and Herbs, it is high Time to seek another Garden, or another Gardener.

IF Ministers preach poorly, and Ministers and People generally live loosely, vainly, and prophanely, (like Atheists) for our Soul's Sake we should go where there is better Preaching, and better Living, *according to the glorious Gospel*; and where the Form of Godliness doth not go without the Power; and where a misguided Zeal for little or *indifferent Things* does not eat out the Vitals of real Religion.

WE can safely speak it to GOD, as well as to *Men*. This is one great End of our Dissenting from the *Church of England*; after we had stay'd in it Twenty, some Thirty, some Forty Years.

#### REASON IV.

IF any Church impose on its Members, either that which is really sinful, or is thought to be so; this will justify any Person in his peaceable leaving the Communion of that Church.

THIS was the Ground of the *Church of England's* Separation from the Church of *Rome*. Dr. Hammond. And this is the Ground of Dissenters Separation from the *Church of England*. And their Practice is justified by that great Man, in the Communion of the *Church of England*, Dr. Stillingfleet, *Iren. p. 199*. His Words are these: "When a Church requires *unnecessary* Conditions of Communion, then *that Church* must take on itself the Charge of *Schism*. Let Men turn and wind themselves which Way they will; by the very same Arguments, that any will prove Separation from the Church of *Rome* to be lawful, because she requires unlawful Things, as Conditions of her Communion; it will be prov'd lawful not to conform to any suspected or unlawful Practice, requir'd by any Church-Government, upon the same Terms, if the Thing so requir'd be, by a serious and sober Enquiry, judg'd Unwarrantable, by

“ a Man's own Conscience.” In another Place the same Author hath these Words:

“ THE Duties CHRIST required of his Disciples, were none but such as were *necessary*: He that came to take away the insupportable Yoke of *Jewish Ceremonies*, certainly did never intend to gall the Necks of his Disciples with another instead of it. And it would be strange, that the Church should require more than CHRIST himself did, and make other Conditions of her Communion than our SAVIOUR did of Discipleship. What possible Reason can be given, why such Things should not be sufficient for Communion with a Church, which are sufficient for Salvation? Was there ever more true and cordial Love in the Churches, than in the Times of the Apostles? And yet they made no such Terms of Communion. How will they answer it at the great Day, for keeping Men out of their Communion by such Things, as they call *indifferent*? Will the Lord JESUS CHRIST thank them for their *Pretence of Decency and Order*; when thereby they keep many out of their Church, whom the Lord JESUS CHRIST will admit into Heaven?”

*So far that Learned Bishop.*

BUT, for as much as this Bishop speaks of their *Pretence of Decency and Order* [observe the Bishop's expression; *their Pretence* to it.] I will just hint what this pretended Decency and Order is.

IT is, that the Minister should officiate, sometimes in one, pretended Holy Garment; sometimes in another; sometimes in *Black*, sometimes in *White*; sometimes *Bowing* and *Cringing*; sometimes with his *Face* to the *Altar*, sometimes to the *People*; sometimes to the *West*, sometimes to the *East*; sometimes *Saying*, and sometimes *Singing* his Prayers: For it is left to their own Pleasure, [as *Indifferent* Things should be] that is, *it may be Sung or Said*: The Scripture saith, *is any Merry, let him Sing Psalms*; it does not say, *let him Sing his Prayers*: But *if any be afflicted, let him Pray*. It is not

a *indiffe*

indifferent, whether Persons *Pray* or *Sing*, when they go to the *Throne of Grace*. This is confounding two distinct Christian Duties; one is *asking* the Mercy; the other is *giving Thanks* for it, when it is received.

THE Charge of JESUS CHRIST to his Disciples, is, *Go, teach them to observe all Things whatsoever I have commanded you*. And to such a Practice, and to no other, he hath affix'd the Promise of his Presence with his Ministers, and his Churches, *Math. xvii. 28. Lo, I am with you, always, to the End of the World.*

### REASON V.

IF any Church, by Virtue of humane Laws, without any Warrant from the Word of GOD, cast out of their Communion such as held no false Doctrines, nor were guilty of any evil Practices, then that Church must take on itself the Charge of Schism.

THIS was the very Foundation of our Fathers Dissenting from the *Church of England*, when in the Year 1662, she [by the same Spirit with those Men, *Dan. vi. 5*] cast out about Two thousand Godly Ministers, purely because they could not sin against CHRIST and their own Consciences, in bringing into the Churches unnecessary Ceremonies. And herein it plainly appears, that the Schism is justly chargeable on the Church (not on them that were cast out) because that Act was made on Purpose to cast them out; for some of the Actors said, before that Day came, *That they were afraid the Presbyterians would continue in the Church.*

BUT if they would not let these Godly Ministers preach in the Churches any longer, it is strange they could think, that they would shut their Mouths, and obey them rather than GOD! For GOD had given them a Commission to preach and had seal'd it, *1 Cor. ix. 2.* and no Command of Men could acquit them of their awful Charge, *1 Cor. ix. 16. Necessity is laid upon me, and Woe unto me, if I preach not the Gospel.*

By

By these very Men GOD hath perswaded many of our Fathers to turn from Sin to CHRIST; therefore they chose rather to dissent from the Church than from the Ministry of those Godly Men; and the rather, because they saw that most of their Places in the Churches were very poorly filled up, [*viz.* by Ignorant and Scandalous Men.] And as our Fathers followed these Godly Men in their Faith and Conversation; so, with Paternal and Christian Affection, they have charged many of us to follow them, in their Doctrines and holy Life.

THUS the *Church of England* hath, unjustly, driven us out; and then they uncharitably condemn us for Schism: It is plain that the Sin lies at their Door, and we must see some hopeful Signs of their Repentance for that Sin, before they may expect us to return to their Communion.

#### REASON VI.

IF such as leave the Communion of the Church have a lawful Dismission from the Church, they are not guilty of Schism.

THIS is the Case of all *Dissenters* in *England*, even of those that once were of the *Church of England*. This Dismission we have in the Act of Toleration, which is an Act of the King, who is own'd by themselves to be *the Head of the Church, over all Persons, and in all Causes, both Ecclesiastical and Civil*: Therefore it is too bold and daring for Men that call themselves *Loyalists*, and especially for *Passive Obedience* Professors, to charge Dissenters with Schism, as long as that Act is in Force. Besides it is the Act of the Lords Spiritual [as they call and own them] as well as of the Lords Temporal and the Representatives of the *whole Nation*; so that when they call Dissenters *Schismatics*, they flie in the Face of the *Three Estates* of the Kingdom.

## PART III.

*Some common OBJECTIONS, brought by Churchmen against Dissenters, Answer'd.*

Object. 1.

*OUR Church is of older standing than yours.**Ans. AND the Church of Rome is older than yours; for*

we read that the Mystery of Iniquity began to work in the Apostles Time, *2 Thess. ii. 7.* If there was any Thing in this Argument, you and we must both turn *Papists.* We are bid to *enquire after the good old Way,* *Jer. vi. 16.* but it must be *good,* as well as *old,* else we must not *walk in it;* and it is no farther *good* than it agrees with the Word of GOD.

AND yet, if our Dissenting Churches agree with Apostolical Doctrines, and Rules of divine Worship, and godly Discipline better than yours, then our Churches are truly older than yours. To decide this Matter, we are heartily willing to stand the Trial of the Scriptures, and of the Fathers, for the first Three Hundred Years after the Ascension of CHRIST. This we can easily make appear whenever it shall be called for.

Obj. 2. *The Church of England is established by Law; your Churches are not.*

*Ans. AND yet we do not cry out, That our Church is in Danger; for we know it is founded upon the Rock of Ages. Matth. xvi. 18. Upon this Rock I will build my Church, and the Gates of Hell shall not prevail against it.*

WE conclude from hence, That the Church, which is often *in Danger*, cannot be the Church of CHRIST; or that Church which is built on CHRIST the Rock.

THE Laws of our Land favour us more than the Laws did JESUS CHRIST and his Apostles; for thus they argue against CHRIST, *We have a Law, and by our Law he ought to die*, Jon x. 7. Thanks be to GOD, our Churches are establish'd by the Laws of Heaven: And yet as we hold to the most and best of the *Thirty nine Articles*, which were establish'd by Law, so our Doctrine, if not our Churches, are establish'd by Law. But suppose they are not establish'd by human Law, their Constitution is such that they don't need such Establishment, and that Church is in a poor Condition that does need it.

Obj. 3. *Our Places of Worship are holy; yours are not so.*

*Ans.* WE know no Differences of Places now, since the Coming of *Jesus Christ*, John iv. 21. Neither did the first Fathers own any such Thing. Yours are holy, only as they are set a-part for GOD's Worship, and so are ours.

BUT if your Places of Divine Worship are holy, it's Pity the Worshipper's themselves are not more agreeable to their holy Places. The Place is Nothing to us; for we had rather hear *Jesus Christ*, and the *pure Word of God*, preach'd in a thatch'd House, than a learned Oration in a stately Cathedral, where Faith in CHRIST, and the Necessity of the New-Birth, and Power of the Spirit of GOD, with the Word in order thereto, should be seldom heard of.

WE can hear the Word, as the Disciples did JESUS CHRIST, on a Mountain, or out of a Ship, or in an House, or in a Barn. GOD once chose a Threshing-Floor to raise the Temple from, 2 Chron. iii. 1. and so he hath since rais'd many a Gospel-Church,

Church, from the pure and powerful Preaching the Gospel in such a Place, separating the Chaff from the Wheat, and making his Word Bread of Life to Souls.

IF we can but hear of CHRIST, and his Salvation, we matter not in what Place; let it be at *Ephrata*, or the *Fields of the Wood*, Psal. cxxxii. 6. And so can others sometimes, when they please, out of a Market-Cross, or under a Tree, or in a Ship, or in the open Field, which are not holy in their own Sense.

Obj. 4. *Do you, Dissenters, think you are in the right, and all our Learned Bishops and Doctors in the wrong? We have both the greatest Men, and the greatest Numbers on our Side.*

*Ans.* WE own it; and so had the *Jews* in the Apostles Time; and so had the *Papists* at the REFORMATION; Rev. xiii. 3. *The whole World wonder'd after the Beast.* We wonder not to hear the old Cry, *Have any of the Rulers, or of the Pharisees believed on Him?* What if they do not, will it follow that we *must not* believe? it may be they are not to be call'd effectually; for it is said, 1 Cor. i. 26. *Ye see your Calling, Brethren, how that not many wise Men after the Flesh, not many Mighty, not many Noble are called: But the Foolish, the Weak, the Base, and the Despised, that God might confound the Wise and the Mighty.* Little did the Chief Priests, Scribes and Pharisees, with the Body of the *Jewish Nation*, think, that a few mean Dissenters from the National Worship were *in the right*, and all they *in the wrong*: They were so far from his Thought, that they counted them ignorant, deluded and cursed: *This People that know not the Law are cursed.* If CHRIST's Disciples were to go in the Way that the Most, or the Greatest go, they might have no Cross to take up, which CHRIST's Followers are sure to meet with.

WHEN the Spirit of GOD would shew us how Few they are that bear Witness to the Truths of CHRIST, He calls them *Two Witnesses*, Rev. xi. 9. to teach us, not to choose our Religion by *Multitudes*, or reject Doctrines, because *Few* believe them: For that may be the *Right Way*, which *Few find*, Mat. vii. 13. and Fewer care to walk in, when they know it.

WE think they have little Reason to *boast* of their Multitudes, but rather to *blush* for their vain Conversation; for Multitudes of graceless Professors do but disgrace any Profession, and keep serious Christians out of their Communion.

Obj. 5. *Dissenters want Unity in their Churches, they are of so many Opinions, that there is no End of them.*

Ans. WE could wish, it might be truly said of all that believe among Dissenters, as was said of the Primitive Christians, That the Multitude of them were all of *one Heart*, and *one Soul*, Acts iv. 32. However, if a little after that, St. Paul and Barnabas fall out, we shall not condemn their Doctrines, or be afraid of their Way: For it was the Way of GOD, though they stumbled in it.

AND truly the Church hath little more Reason to boast of Unity than we have: Witness the warm Disputes and Divisions in Convocation, and the wide Divisions of *High* and *Low-Church*; the Difference in Doctrines, and Manner of Reading the Prayers; some say all themselves, others make the Clerk say half the Prayers; some are for Organs and Anthems, others dislike them; some bow at the Name of *Jesus*, others dislike it; some bow towards the *East*, others disapprove of the Practice, (as Heathenish, or as one of *Ezekiel's* Abominations, Ezek. viii. 16.) Some are for Kneeling at Baptism, others in the Church will not submit to it; the most administer the Sacrament but *Three Times* a Year, others do it every Month, and some every Lord's Day. Some never read Prayers

ers in the Church on Week Days, others think they are bound to do it every Day, and others compound for *Wednesday* and *Friday*.

AND the Worship in the Cathedral differs very much from that in the Parish-Churches.

THE Mother hath her Singing Men and Boys by the Dozens, in their Surplices; [this is all the Holiness that these Men have; as soon as they have done Acting here, they are also Actors in the Play-Houses,] the Daughters content themselves with one Clerk a-piece, and allow him no Surplice; tho', in Truth, they need such an Emblem of Holiness as much as the others; for they are often Men of most wicked Lives. The Mother *Sings* her Prayers, (as if she was not in earnest) the Daughters *Read* theirs, though formal enough.

MANY of the *Church of England* themselves are even sick to see and hear Cathedral *Decency and Order*. "But if all the *Church of England* were of one Mind, "GOD will one Day convince Men, That the Unity of the Church lies more in the Unity of *Faith* "and *Affection*, than in the Uniformity of *doubtful* "Rites and Ceremonies." As saith their own Bishop *Stillingfleet*. Violent urging Uniformity in the Church hath been an Inlet to Superstition and the greatest Bar to Unity. We know that it hath been always attempted under the specious Pretence of furthering Religion. But how ugly doth this Mask look when close viewed by wise Men; especially when they compare their Pretence with their common Conversation?

Obj. 6: *The Church of England is more charitable than Dissenting Churches are.*

*Ans.* LET every one speak as they find, we know the Church hath shewn her Charity to some many Ways, as in her Forgiveness of Offences, tho' on the slightest Hints of Sorrow; and in settling liberal yearly Incomes on very undeserving Persons, both Clergy and

and Laity; this made an old Doctor say, (while he was sweeping the Money into the Bag) "Well, our Church is the best-constituted Church in the World." Yes, said another, it is the best-constituted Church that *ever was* in the World.

(1.) ALL do not, nor can see with the same Eyes. We believe that these Gentlemen, in crying up the *Excellent Constitution* of the *Church of England*, speak according to the best of their Knowledge.

BUT we ask their Pardon, if in this we cannot *say after the Parson*. And we are sure that some of the Inferior Clergy have not been of this Mind, while they and their Families have made very poor Shifts to live, tho' some Officers, in the Church, have had *many Thousands per Annum*; yet have *done no more Work* for it, than those that are in Want. Some have two Livings, and very large ones too; others have none at all.

THE boldest Men commonly get the better of those that are most humble and modest.

(2.) WE cannot admire the *Constitution* of the *Church of England*, above all Others; because *Livings*, or the *Reversion* of *Livings*, are often bought *with Money*. This is a Practice, unknown to the Scriptures, and the first Ages of Christianity. If the People will like them, they may; but in they will come. This Practice the Church forbids, but often winks at it. *Elders*, *Pastors*, or *Bishops* were chosen of old by the *People*, *Universa Fraternalitatis Suffragio*. Cypr. Epist. By the *Consent* and *Suffrage* of all the Brethren.

(3.) We add, that we cannot admire the Constitution of the Church, because *she has appointed so many Unscriptural Officers* in it; as *Archbishops*, *Lord Bishops*, *Deans*, *Arch-Deacons*, &c. The Scriptures know but of two sorts of Officers, in the Gospel-Church, that is, *Bishops* and *Deacons*.

For *Bishops* and *Elders* are the same Office, *Acts* xx. 17. call'd *Elders*; *verse* 28. call'd *Overseers*, or *Bishops*. *Tit.* i. 5. They that are called *Elders*, *ver.* 7. are called *Bishops*.

*Clemens Romanus, Anno 70.* mentions many *Bishops* in the Church of *Corinth*, whom at other Times he calls *Presbyters* or *Elders*, *Epist. 1. ad Cor. pag. 54, 57.* He puts them together in the same Line, *pag. 58.*

(4.) WE cannot admire the Constitution of the Church of *England*: As it has one Head, or *Universal Pastor* over many *Thousands of Congregations*. This is *Unscriptural*; nor can such a *Pastor* know the *State of his Flock*, and look well to his *Herd*s. This is an Office never appointed by *JESUS CHRIST's Pastor Pastorum*, *P. Mar. An. 155.* saith, *all the Church assembled together in one place, where the Bishop preached.* *Apol. 1. pag. 98.* For, saith he, *Where the Pastor is, there the Flock must be,* *Epist. ad Philadelph, pag. 42.*

(5.) WE cannot say the Church of *England* is the best constituted Church in the World: Because the Discipline of the Church is put into the Hands of *Lawyers*, not of *Divines*. This is none of the Excellency of her Constitution; that if a Man will provide Money enough, the *Bishops Court* can put him in a Way, how to defy all the Censures of Minister and People.

(6.) We cannot admire the Church's Constitution; because an *Atheist*, or any *Vile Person* may come to the holy Sacrament, provided he comes decently; tho' he does not take it as a *Memorial of Christ's Death*, or as a *Means of Grace*, but because he cannot enjoy a *Place of Trust*, or Profit, under the Government without it.

THO' some, whose Hearts are right with GOD, have higher Ends in joining with the Church, yet many cry up the Church for no other End than the *Craftsmen* did *Diana*, lest their Gain should be lost. From such Money-changers the Church needs to be purg'd, as *JESUS CHRIST* did the Temple, *with a Scourge of Cords.*

NONE make so much Noise of the Church, as those that seldom come there, or if they do, are the greatest Disgrace to it, such as have little to say for Religion, and who practise less than they know. Unless we allow these to be Acts of Religion.

1. THEIR Drinking Healths to the Church, as if she was always in a sickly Condition.

2. THEIR For-swearing themselves at Elections, under Pretence of *Upholding the Church*. What, is the Church in such a poor Plight as to need the Force of Hell to relieve it? But, O Shame! That any of the Clergy shou'd do so! Well, it seems, Dissenters are uncharitable, and yet I never heard of any one Dissenter, in my Life, that wish'd or drank the Damnation of the Churchmen: But I have heard that Parsons, as well as others, drink the Dissenters Damnation. (Cold Charity!) Neither is that any notable Piece of the Church's Charity, that will not part with a few *indifferent Things*, tho' it were to save the Dissenters from Damnation. Not to say any thing of the heavy Fines and Imprisonments, whereby they have persecuted many Thousands of godly Dissenters to their Graves, and their Families to extream Poverty.

If any among us transgress Gospel-Rules, we rebuke and exhort; and if they deserve it, we cast them out of the Church; and if they give Evidence of Repentance, we are ready to take them in again with Joy.

BUT we cannot believe that a Man is sorry for his Sin of Drunkenness, when he continues to practise it; or that a Man is sorry for his Sins, on the Lord's-Day, that returns to them all the Week: We think we have no Warrant for such large Charity.

NOW, Who cannot heartily wish, that Church-Men had any Colour, to add, That *the Church of England is more holy than Dissenting Churches are*; that they have *more Purity of Gospel-Doctrine*, more the *Power of Godliness*, more *Unity in Love*, *Brighter Divines*, Men *more holy in their Lives*, that can say to their Flocks, *What ye have seen in me, do*. Sure many of the Clergy dare not tell their People so. That which some count *Odious*, we count our *Honour*; I mean to be called *Presbyterian*. Some think this *Term* more reproachful, than *Drunkard* or *Swearer*, &c. If

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any of us fall, you, like Fools, are glad of it; *Fools makes a mock of Sin*: We are sorry for *your Sins*, as well as *our own*. But you have little need to reflect upon us, if we have *one* scandalous among us, you have *ten*. Besides we take care to purge them out as fast as we can discover them, dealing with them according to Gospel Rule, not making them *pay us Money*, but we endeavour to make them *sensible of their Sin*; we pray with them, and for them: And if there is occasion, we cast them out of the Church-Communion. Why don't *you* do so? One of the Clergy answered, *We should leave but few in the Church, if we took this Method*. Gentlemen, When you are ready to reflect on Dissenters, look into your Parishes, search the Ale-houses, among the Loose, and Vain, and Prophanes, the Drunkards, Swearers, and Unclean; and among those that are called to the Bar of Justice for Thieving, Housebreaking, Robbing on the Highway, and the Multitudes that die at the Gallows; read and see, whether they were of *ours*, or of *the Communion of the Church of England*.

#### CONCLUSION.

IF the *Church of England* would but remove these Causes of Offence, they should soon see that we and our People would return to their Communion, provided they desire it (which we greatly question.) But 'till then, we take the Liberty, by Law, allow'd us; that is, Peaceably to withdraw ourselves from their Communion; and therein to take up our Cross, and follow the Lord JESUS CHRIST, being willing to submit to Poverty, Disgrace and Contempt in the World, rather than sin against GOD and our Consciences; and betray the Honour that is due alone to our Lord JESUS CHRIST, into the Hands of Men, with a Kiss and a Complement of *Hail Master*. We do not disturb the *Church of England* in their Worship; we do not call their Members to come to us; or  
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if any of our *common* Hearers go to the Church, and abide there, we do not invite them back. And if, after all this, they will condemn us, let us comfort ourselves, That God is with us, blessing our Ministry, for Sinners Conversion, and Believers Comfort and Growth in Grace.

**F I N I S.**

